

I saw you last, but I did not call at the house. It is a very sweet little problem, and I would not have missed it for a good deal. However, I must not sit gossiping here, but must get these disreputable clothes off and return to my highly respectable self."

I could see by his manner that he had stronger reasons for satisfaction than his words alone would imply. His eyes twinkled and there was even a touch of color upon his sallow cheeks. He hastened upstairs, and a few minutes later I heard the slam of the hall door, which told me that he was off once more upon his congenial hunt.

I waited until midnight, but there was no sign of his return, so I retired to my room, and, as usual, fell asleep.

to my room. It was no accident that I was waiting for him to be away for days and nights on end when he was hot upon me, a scent, so that his lateness caused me no surprise. I do not know at what hour he came in, but when I came down to breakfast in the morning there he was, with a cup of coffee in one hand and the paper in the other, as fresh and trim as possible.

"You will excuse my beginning with-

out you, Watson," said he; "but you remember that our client has rather an early appointment this morning."

"Why, it is after 9 now," I answered. "I should not be surprised if that were he. I thought I heard a ring."

It was, indeed, our friend the financier. I was shocked by the change which had come over him, for his face, which was naturally of a broad and massive mould, was now pinched and fallen in, while his hair seemed to me at least a shade whiter. He entered

"I do not know what I have done to be so severely tried," said he. "Only two days ago I was a happy and prosperous man, without a care in the world. Now I am left to a lonely and dishonored age. One sorrow comes upon the heels of another. My niece Mary has deserted me."

"Deserted you?"

"Yes. Her bed this mornin' had not been slept in, her room was empty, and a note for me lay upon the hall table. I had said to her last night,

had married my boy, I might have been well with him. Perhaps it was thoughtless of me to say so. It is to that remark that she refers in this note:

"My Dearest Uncle—I feel that I have brought trouble upon you and that if I had not differently this terrible misfortune might never have occurred. I cannot, with this thought upon my mind, ever again be happy under your roof, and I feel that I must leave you forever. Do not worry about my future, for that is provided for; and, above all, do not search for me, for it will be fruitless labor and an ill-service to me. In life or in death, I am ever your loving MARY."

"What could she mean by that note," Mr. Holmes. "Do you think it points to suicide?"

"Nothing of the kind. It is, perhaps the best possible solution. I trust, Mr. Holder, that you are nearing the end of your troubles."

"Ha! You say so! You have heard something, Mr. Holmes; you have learned something! Where are the gems?"

"I would not think £1,000 apiece an excessive sum for them?"

"I would pay ten."

"That would be unnecessary. Three thousand will cover the matter. And

With a shriek of joy our client clutched it up.

"You have it," he gasped. "I am saved! I am saved!"

The reaction of joy was as passion-

ate as his grief had been, and he hugged his recovered gems to his bosom.

"There is one other thing you owe, Mr. Holder," said Sherlock Holmes, rather sternly.

"Owe!" He caught up a pen.

"Name the sum and I will pay it."

"No, the debt is not to me. You owe a very humble apology to that noble lad, your son, who has carried himself in this matter as I should be proud to see my own son do, should I ever chance to have one."

"Then it was not Arthur who took them?"

"I told you yesterday, and I repeat today, that it was not."

"You are sure or it? Then let us hurry to him at once, to let him know that the truth is known."

"He knows it already. When I had cleared it all up I had an interview with him, and, guding that he would not tell me the story, I told it to him, on which he had to confess that I was right, and to add the very few details which were not yet quite clear to me. Your news of this morning, however, may open his lips."

"For heaven's sake, tell me, then."

"I will do so, and I will show you the steps by which I reached it. And let me say to you, first, that which it is hardest for me to say and for you to hear, there has been an understanding between Sir George Burnwell and your niece Mary. They have now fled together."

"My Mary? Impossible!"

"It is, unfortunately, more than possible; it is certain. Neither you nor your son knew the true character of this man when you admitted him into your family circle. He is one of the

most dangerous men in England—a ruined gambler, an absolutely desperate villain, a man without heart or conscience. Your niece knew nothing of such men, and she had no heart for her, as he had done to a hundred before her, she flattered herself that she alone had touched his heart. The devil knows best what he said, but at least she became his tool and was in the habit of seeing him nearly every evening."

"I cannot, and I will not believe it!" cried the doctor, with an ashen face.

"I will tell you, then, what occurred at your house last night. Your niece—"

when you had, as she thought, gone to your room, slipped down and talked to her lover through the window which leads into the stable lane. His foot-marks had pressed right through the mud, and he stood there. She told him of the coronet. His wicked lust for gold kindled at the news, and he bent her to his will. I have no doubt that she loved you, but there are women in whom the love of a lover extinguishes all other loves, and she had such a woman. She had heard hardy listened to his instructions when she saw you coming downstairs, on which she closed the window rapidly.

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